

Facilitating Effective Superfund Public Meetings

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We Are Going to Talk About What It Takes to Facilitate a Public Meeting

- What is the full scope of facilitation
- What does it take to be a facilitator
- Facilitation skills and strategies
- Some basic facilitation tools



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Facilitating Effective Superfund Public Meetings

Part 1. Understanding Facilitation



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To Facilitate Is To Make Easier

- You are there to help all participants engage in the meeting
- That work begins way before the meeting begins



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Sample Facilitator Achievements

- Make the process work
- Support effective listening
- Create positive, cooperative environment
- Help the group understand different perspectives
- Group effectiveness and synergy
- Help the group to provide useful input
- Support the search for common ground

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Sources of Facilitation

- Facilitators
- Facilitative individuals
- Facilitative leaders
- Facilitative groups/communities

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Part 2. The Facilitator Role



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Process Leadership

- You are the guide, not the boss
- Your job is to build a powerful process
- Shepherd the information and relationships necessary to achieve a positive result

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Process Leadership

- You are neutral as to the outcome and do not "weigh in" to the answer
- You ensure that an acceptable one is achieved by the group
- You should not be both the technical expert and the facilitator
- Build clear relationships among the EPA staff at the meeting.

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Role 1: Tour Guide



- Create absolute clarity of the desired destination
- Design a clear map of the process
- Keep participants aware of the journey all along the way
- Create an atmosphere of respect, trust, and cooperation
- Make it fun

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Role 2: Good Cop



- Establish constructive groundrules
- Model positive behavior
- Reward good behavior and group success

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Role 3: (A Little Bit of) Bad Cop



- Correct bad behavior (gently)
- Talk to repeat offenders (preferably in private)
- Call a time out

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Role 4: Coach

- Manage expectations
- Model and teach people how to participate constructively
- Model and teach people how to communicate effectively
- Take advantage of all teachable moments
- Show them what they are achieving
- Provide constructive corrections



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Part 3. Requirements for Facilitators



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Neutrality

The state of not supporting or helping either side in a conflict or disagreement

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Who Can Facilitate?

- Anyone who can serve as a true neutral, AND
- Is accepted in that role by the participants, AND
- Has the skills, attitudes, and behaviors needed

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Class Discussion

- Are we providing effective facilitation for Superfund public meetings? How or how not?
- Under what circumstances can EPA staff serve as facilitators for our own meetings?
- Where should we be seeking outside help?

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Facilitator Behaviors

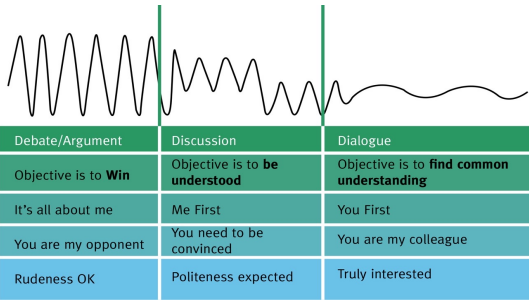
- | | |
|---------------|----------------|
| ▪ Humility | ▪ Respect |
| ▪ Patience | ▪ Energy |
| ▪ Flexibility | ▪ Humor |
| ▪ Empathy | ▪ Authenticity |

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Facilitator Knowledge: Dialogue



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Facilitator Knowledge: Dialogue

Setting the Stage for Dialogue

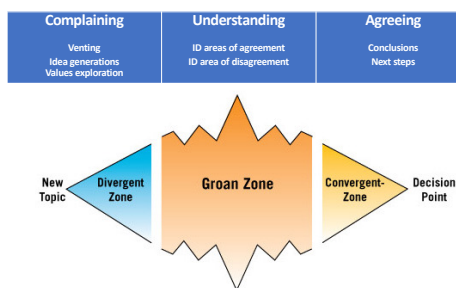
- Create a safe place for participants
- Make openness and trust the rule rather than the exception
- Encourage and reward the injection of new perspectives
- Plan the agenda, time and information to allow for in-depth interaction

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Facilitator Knowledge: Meeting Dynamics



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Facilitator Knowledge: Group Dynamics

- Forming
- Storming
- Norming
- Performing
- Transforming

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Part 4. Setting the Stage for Successful Meetings



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Advance Planning

- The success of your meeting is directly a result of your preparation and planning
- This includes every aspect of the meeting

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Get the Right Stakeholders in the Room

- Get to know key stakeholders
- Ensure that all of the key voices are in the room
- Understand key issues in advance

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Set Clear Meeting Goals

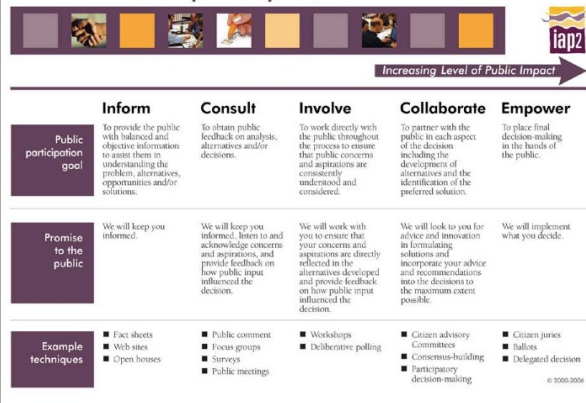
- Set specific goals and communicate them widely
- Consider the level of public participation

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IAP2's Public Participation Spectrum



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Set Clear Meeting Goals

- Possible Goals:
 - Relationships
 - Learning
 - Dialogue
 - Input
 - Common Ground
 - Agreements

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Set Clear Meeting Goals

- Don't try to do too much in any one meeting

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Identify Participant Needs

- Identify the current level of stakeholder knowledge
- Recognize relationship, trust, and credibility needs
- Identify the full set of facts needed by stakeholders

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Create a Focused Agenda

- Take time to acknowledge who is in the room
- Plan an agenda tied to the goals
- Use the agenda to help communicate what you hope to achieve and how
- Avoid lots of small time periods and consecutive talking heads
- Be flexible and leave time for dialogue and questions

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Establish a Facilitation Plan

- Plan specific techniques
- Have backup plans for different possible outcomes
- Be as interactive as possible
- Use dialogue as much as possible
- If people need to vent, you need to plan for it

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Design the Right Environment

- The environment should support the meeting goals
- Furniture moving and catering are in your job description!

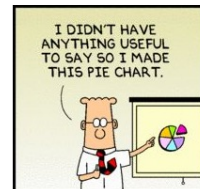
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Prepare Effective Information

- Think about information from the point of view of stakeholders
- Make presentations accessible
- Provide handouts



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Prepare all Presenters

- Prepare presenters and presentations to ensure that they will be effective with the planned audience
- Conduct dry runs and provide feedback from a stakeholder perspective



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Small Group Discussion: Planning

- Work as a group to discuss the advance planning activities that could help us in preparing for Superfund public meetings
- Think of a meeting that one of you needs to plan, when should you start planning and what are some of the key activities that you should do?

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Part 5. Facilitator Skills and Strategies



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Manage the Meeting: **Set the Tone**

- Stay emotionally centered, not the center of attention
- Stay in the meeting, don't drift
- Stay positive and calm
- Encourage everyone equally
- Model the behaviors that you want to see in others
- Acknowledge lapses in behavior and use groundrules
- Trust yourself, do not give in to those who would have you deviate from facilitative behaviors

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Manage the Meeting: **Stay Connected**

- Stay where everyone can see you
- Maintain eye contact
- Engage people by name
- Listen to what is being said but also for tone and body language

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Manage the Meeting: **Manage Time**

- Be flexible, adjust as needed
- Don't cut people off, but help them wrap up
- Do regular check-ins: remind people why they are here, where they're going and where things stand
- Provide time checks at key points as the meeting winds down
- Engage the group in choices due to time (would you rather...)

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Manage Discussions: **Draw Participants In**

- Many people are hesitant to contribute and need to be encouraged
- Keep track of who is participating and call on folks as needed to get different viewpoints
- Establishing advance relationships with stakeholders

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Manage Discussions: **Model Good Listening**

- Model effective listening skills such as paraphrasing, summarizing, and clarifying,
- Help participants to pay attention to each other

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Manage Discussions: **Help Everyone Understand**

- Ask the questions that people are certainly thinking
- Ask for clarification of terms and issues
- Ask clarifying questions to understand what participants mean
- Ask relevant, probing open-ended questions to get at core truths and information
- Help weaker communicators be understood

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Manage Discussions: **Balance Advocacy and Inquiry**

- People want to make their point, but they don't always pay attention to others
- Help make sure everyone is listening and help them to understand each other

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Manage Discussions: **Test Stated Assumptions, Judgments, and Beliefs**

- Seek to clarify what is fact and what is not without directly contradicting the speaker
- Challenge potentially incorrect assertions that are made with non-threatening questions like "how do we know that is true?" or "do we all agree with this?"
- Seek additional input to build shared understanding

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Manage Discussions: **Clarify Differences**

- Identify and clearly define the nature of real differences between participants
- Clarify those that are based in misunderstanding
- Help the group to explore differences

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Manage Discussions: **Move from Positions to Values and Interests**

- Common ground is built on values and interests, which are embedded in the positions we take
- Explore why participants hold their positions and make values and interests obvious to all

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Manage Discussions: **Capture Areas of Agreement**

- Often, you are the only person in the room that sees where most people agree
- Do not let these moments go by, identify what you are hearing and ask the group for confirmation
- Capture areas where all participants agree

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Respond to Challenges

- Use groundrules first, then elevate the response as needed.
- Ask participants for their assistance in deciding the appropriate choice
- Take a break
- Plan for additional assistance ahead of time
- In rare cases, you may end the meeting early if you cannot control the situation

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Respond to Challenges: Difficult Behaviors

- dominating the floor
- interrupting
- withdrawing
- challenging the facilitator
- side conversations
- personal attacks

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Respond to Challenges: Low Energy/Attention

- Pay attention to body language and tone of voice
- Side conversations and snide comments can be clear signals that you have lost the room.
- Don't just push through these situations
- When few people are engaged in the task at hand, your only option is to stop the meeting and redirect

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Capture Results: Keeping Track

- You must juggle multiple ideas in your head, bring them together succinctly and play them back to the group.
- Organize, connect, and summarize ideas
- Stop and orient the group regularly, "this is where we are, how we got here, where we are going"

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Capture Results: Identifying Agreement

- You can see things that others don't
- Identify when agreements emerge
- Help the group to clarify those agreements
- Record them clearly, and use them as foundations for future discussion

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Capture Results: Closing the Discussion

- Have a recognized ending, rather than fade away
- Capture achievements so everyone can see
- Let people know what they just did, what was decided
- Seek agreement on the results, what it means, and what happens next

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Small Group Exercise: Applying Skills

- Think about a typical public meeting and some of the situations you have encountered
- First talk about WHO should be facilitating your meetings
- Then identify some of the skills and strategies discussed and how your team can use them effectively



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Part 6. Basic Facilitation Tools

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Groundrules

- One of the facilitators most powerful tools
- Creates common agreement about how all participants will behave
- Allows behavior correction without singling out individuals
- Must be identified and agreed to up front
- Keep them short, direct, and specific
- Limit to about 5 or 6 total

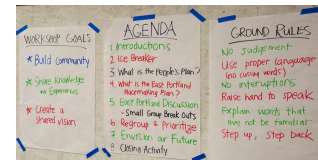
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Typical Groundrule Topics

- Civility
- Respect
- Listening
- Cooperation
- Agreement



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Enforcing Groundrules

- Propose draft groundrules and ask for additions or amendments
- Get verbal acknowledgment from all participants and read body language to check for lack of commitment
- Post the ground rules for everyone to see
- Remind participants of the ground rules to correct bad behavior
- Be consistent and refer back as necessary to remind the group of their commitments

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Ice Breakers

- Identify who is in the room
- Help people to know each other
- Make people feel comfortable

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Ice Breakers: **Smaller meetings**

- Icebreaker exercise
- Small group conversations
- Ensure everyone introduces themselves

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Ice Breakers: **Larger meetings**

- Exercise where people greet those in their immediate vicinity
- Show of hands for key demographics
- Greet people at the door
- Position staff throughout the room

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Brainstorming

- Quickly generate a lot of ideas
- Thoughts build on each other
- No censorship



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Brainstorm Do's and Don'ts

Facilitator Brainstorming Do's	Facilitator Brainstorming Don'ts
Mirror what is said to keep things moving	Interrupt
Go in order the first time or two to make sure everyone has a chance	Reject identical or similar ideas
Treat all ideas the same	Heap undo praise on any ideas
Move around, encourage people to stand up to create energy	Suggest any idea is not worth writing down
Ask for clarification if needed	Favor some participants over others
Repeat the subject of brainstorming to keep folks on track	Give any non-verbal gestures that signal approval or disapproval
Get flipchart help to keep up	Rush or pressure the group
Keep group aware of time remaining	Give up if there is a period of silence
Give time after the initial surge of ideas is completed	Let a few participants dominate the process

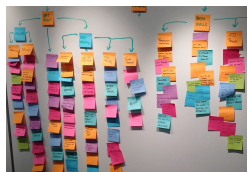
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Organizing Brainstorming Results

1. Eliminate duplicates
2. Combine similar thoughts
3. ID categories
4. Assign ideas to categories
5. ID/edit categories
6. Get group agreement



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Card Storming

- Each participant writes their ideas on individual cards, one idea per card
- Cards can be placed on the wall for the organizing process



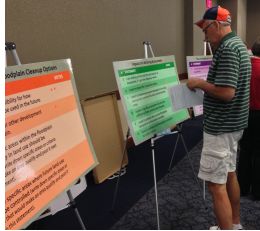
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Prioritizing Approaches

- Item-by-Item
- Person-by Person
- Vote for what you like
- Assign your votes



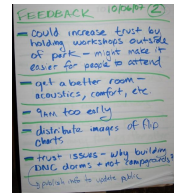
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Flipcharts

- Few words to write close to what is said
- Ask if you captured thoughts correctly
- Explain abbreviations and be consistent
- Title and number every page
- Use block print with thick lines
- One to two inches for text
- Dark colors for text (blue, black, brown)
- Alternate text colors
- Use red, orange, and yellow for highlighting only
- Don't get too fancy, you won't keep up



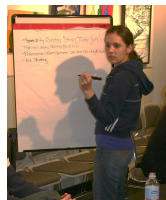
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Note-Takers

- Capture who is in the group
- Summarize but don't interpret
- Capture all key points from flip charts
- Capture descriptive language/statements
- Resist the urge to help facilitate
- Ask only to clarify
- Organize notes by topic and agenda

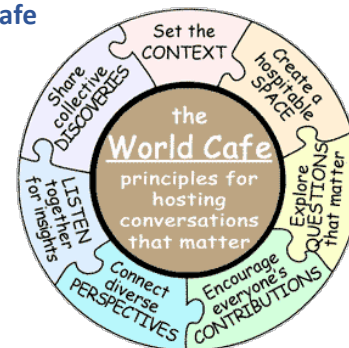


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World Cafe



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Café Etiquette

- Focus on what matters
- Contribute your thinking and experience
- Speak from the heart
- Listen to understand
- Link and connect ideas
- Listen together for deeper themes, insights and questions
- Play, doodle, draw



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Today's Question

What are some immediate and simple actions we can use to improve the overall public participation with our communities and our public meeting?



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